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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

Seventh periodic report of States parties due in 2015

Paraguay*

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A. Introduction

1. Pursuant to article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which it ratified in 1986, the Republic of Paraguay hereby submits the seventh periodic report on the implementation of the Convention. The report focuses on the main concerns and recommendations formulated by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its fiftieth session in 2011. Paraguay presents the progress achieved in the area of women's rights in the period 2011-2015, and the related challenges faced.

2. The Committee has praised the current Government's adoption of the "Paraguay 2030" national development plan, which provides for equal opportunities for women and men as a cross-cutting issue and specific objective towards reduction of extreme poverty. The gender perspective has been mainstreamed into all priority activities of the Government.

3. In 2012, Act No. 4.675 created the Ministry for Women's Affaires in accordance with General Recommendation No. 6, paragraph 1(a), and the Committee's recommendations to Paraguay. The result has been a greater ability to influence the Executive and other State bodies, including the Social Affairs Office, through political dialogue; and gender mainstreaming into the main plans of the Government. The new structure is conducive to more effective action for women's economic and political empowerment, over and above support for activities against gender-based violence and trafficking in women. Administratively, the Ministry for Women's Affaires cooperates directly with the Ministry of Finance in the preparation and execution of the budget. Although allocations have not increased, services are provided on a sustainable basis, as funding has shifted from external cooperation sources to the treasury's own resources. The new Ministry's central offices in the capital, two shelters and four regional centres in the interior of the country are fully operational. A directorate for gender affairs has been created in the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare. Gender mechanisms set up in other bodies include the National Secretariat for Housing and Habitat, the Secretariat for Social Action, the National Secretariat for Sport, the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs and the Armed Forces.

4. The Ministry for Women's Affaires implements the Paraguayan Standard Model of Internal Control (MECIP), currently in the stage of technical capacity building, through human potential development, the preparation of an institutional strategic plan for the period 2014-2018, ethical accords and commitments, a protocol for good governance, the application of the business process management model, work on the Ministry's organizational structure, and an assessment of the Ministry's internal control system. With the support of the Organization of American States (OAS), a training course on participatory gender assessment (PGA) methods has been organized for decision-makers and other officials of the institution, with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security and the Public Prosecution Service. As a strategic means for compiling, disseminating and supplying information to the general public, the Ministry for Women's Affaires has launched an official website and makes use of digital tools, such as the social media (Facebook and Twitter).

5. In order to strengthen its new institutional role, the Ministry for Women's Affaires has drawn up the Strategic Institutional Plan, 2014-2018, which provides

comprehensive guidance for activities that mainstream the gender approach in public and private organizations and promote actual and effective equality between women and men, women's empowerment and the prevention, prosecution and elimination of gender-based violence and trafficking in women and children.

6. Since the Government took office for the period 2013-2018 and launched a Government Plan with clear key provisions for equal opportunities and with a vision in which women play a central role through a new institutional hierarchy conducive to effective gender policies, major advances have been made in the sectors of health, education, violence prevention, access to credit, rural women's participation, access to housing, assistance for women through social and conditional transfer programmes aimed at poverty reduction, and women's participation in the electoral process. True to its mission, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has provided key support for public policy preparation, institution-building, inter-agency linkages and cooperation with civil society. External cooperation bodies have acted in accordance with their mandates for gender equality and women's advancement. In 2015, they all carried out research and published material on gender equality, the main breaches of equity in the country, and women's participation in politics and elections.

7. The preparation of this report has been the responsibility of the Ministry for Women's Affaires, assisted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the human rights network of the Executive, and the gender and human rights mechanisms of the legislature and the judiciary; and, in line with General Recommendation No. 10 of the Committee, public discussion has been undertaken through civil-society organizations for women. The framework used has consisted of the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto, the Committee's concerns and recommendations, the Peking+20 review, the report on the implementation of the MDGs, the report and constructive dialogue on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 2015, and the recent update of the common core document.

8. This report is organized by articles of the Convention and the Committee's main concerns and recommendations.

9. Pursuant to the Committee's encouragement to submit the concluding observations to all relevant ministries, to both chambers of the legislature and to the judiciary, the following measures have been taken: Distribution to the top authorities of the three branches of government; publication of the recommendations addressed by the United Nations to Paraguay in December 2013, through cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN-Women and the Ministry for Women's Affaires; and ongoing updates to the national system for monitoring compliance with international recommendations (SIMORE), including those of the Committee.

Part I. Legal protection of women's rights. Appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women

Articles 1-3

10. In reference to the recommendations of paragraph 13 of the concluding observations and with a view to ongoing alignment of the legal system with the constitutional precepts of gender equality, the National Congress announces the adoption and promulgation of the following legislation: Act No. 4313/11 on budget allocations to the programmes for reproductive health and childbirth kit distribution of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare; Act No. 4628/12 amending article 229 of Act No. 1160/1997 on the Criminal Code, as amended by Act No. 3440/08; Act No. 4686/12 regularizing the situation of undocumented foreign migrants; Act No. 4744/12 incorporating vaccination against the human papilloma virus into the immunization programme of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare; Act No. 4616/12 establishing the list of places to be accessible to persons with a physical or motor disability as a matter of priority; Act No. 4633/12 to combat harassment in public and private educational establishments; Act No. 4684/12 declaring 12 April as National Breast Cancer Day ; Act No. 4720/12 establishing the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SENADIS); Act No. 4788/12, Comprehensive Act to Combat Trafficking in Persons; Act No. 4819/2012 ratifying the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189); Act No. 4933/2013 authorizing voluntary affiliation of self-employed workers, employers, homemakers and domestic workers with the social insurance, retirement and pension fund of the Social Security Institute (IPS); Act No. 5344/2014 establishing maternity leave for women in elected positions; Act No. 5378/2014 amending article 229 of Act No. 1160/97 on the Criminal Code, as amended by Act No. 4628/12, and stipulating deprivation of liberty for one to six years for taking advantage of family relations or cohabitation to exercise physical or mental violence against another person, whether cohabitant or not; Act No. 5415/15 establishing the Child Maintenance Arrears Register (REDAM); Act No. 5419/15 amending articles 17 and 20 of Act No. 1/92 on the Civil Code to raise the age of consent to marriage; Act No. 5407/15 on domestic labour; Act No. 5446/15 on public policies regarding rural women; and Act No. 5508 on the promotion and protection of motherhood and support for breastfeeding. (See annex 1)

11. The National Congress is currently examining draft Acts on the comprehensive protection for women against all forms of violence; on sexual, reproductive, maternal and perinatal health"; amending article 32(r) of Act No. 834/96 on the Electoral Code to increase women's political participation; establishing incentives for women's participation in politics; on support for women heads of household; and establishing the National Public Safety System. In connection with the draft Act on comprehensive protection for women against all forms of violence, a set of meetings, inter-agency workshops and social and departmental forums has been launched to make up for delays, due to lack of sufficient civil-society participation, in the consideration of other similar draft legislation.

12. The Ministry of Justice approved protocols for assisting persons with a mental or social disability in having access to justice (Resolution No. 224/15), disabled persons deprived of liberty (Resolution No.731/15), transsexuals, transvestites and

transgender persons deprived of liberty (Resolution No. 744/15), aliens deprived of liberty (Resolution 789/15) and older persons deprived of liberty (Resolution No. 790/15).

13. The Ministry has also approved a national programme for specific assistance to women deprived of liberty (Resolution No. 168/15), which provides for an inter-agency workshop to formulate strategic public policies with a human rights perspective for such women, undertake activities designed to improve the conditions of incarceration of women, organize training for prison personnel and carry out relevant activities based on a gender and human rights approach.

14. The Ministry for Women's Affaires has promoted national and regional linkages to guide the activities of various cooperating institutions towards optimizing the provision of services and taking all-round action. The legal tools to be used are a regional protocol for gender-sensitive investigations into intra-family offences involving violence against women, a regional protocol for comprehensive care for victims of gender-based violence, and institutional coordination mechanisms on gender-based violence.

15. As regards the Committee's recommendation to broaden anti-discrimination legislation, the bill "against all forms of discrimination", presented in 2007 and accepted by some commissions but rejected by others, was not adopted at the 13 November 2014 meeting and, according to the Senate's decision, the matter was closed. However, it prompted debates in the media and the social media, where favourable opinions were countered by more traditional and conservative voices. Equality and non-discrimination have been promoted through the afore-mentioned enactments on policies for rural women, access of disabled persons to employment, and protection of maternity and breastfeeding (in the last case, despite the opinion of employers' representatives that such protection would not be viable and would negatively affect the hiring of women, mainly those of reproductive age). As regards the protection of domestic workers, a new enactment reduces the wage gap, raising the minimum wage benchmark from 40 to 60 per cent, limits the working hours to eight, as is the case for workers in general, and provides for retirement and health care benefits.

16. Under Decree No. 7839/11, the Ministry of Civil Service launched the equality and non-discrimination plan, 2011-2014, aimed at promoting equality, safeguarding non-discrimination in civil service accessibility, opportunities and careers, and ensuring that the State serves society without discrimination, in line with the country's constitutional mandates, international commitments and legislation.

17. Regarding the Committee's concern that women are not sufficiently aware of the promotion, protection and respect to which their rights are entitled under the Convention and the Optional Protocol, and the recommendation to undertake awareness-raising campaigns targeted at women, the judiciary and the law professionals, it should be noted that the judiciary applies an institutional cross-cutting gender-promotion policy approved by the Supreme Court. The relevant official website features a justice and gender monitoring centre showing the situation of women in the various justice administration bodies, namely positions assigned to women, women's participation in public affairs and the economy, gender-based violence, women's access to basic services, situation of persons deprived of liberty, surveys, and users' satisfaction reports.

18. The gender monitoring centre of the Supreme Court includes a section for gender-sensitive judicial decisions (orders, judgements and verdicts) handed down in the capital and the country's other judicial districts. That case law database is to contain rulings compatible with the treaties on women's rights and help to disseminate and share the country's best judicial practices. Relevant awareness-raising and dissemination means have included a workshop to validate a gender-sensitive case-law thesaurus; a play entitled "Autopsy", highlighting the negative implications of gender violence for society; a campaign entitled "Decí Igualdad" to promote equality and prevent discrimination against women in the justice system; and a photography contest entitled "For a Paraguay free of violence against women". Highlighting the combat against gender violence and femicide, the Judicial Secretariat for Gender Issues, reproduces the "Zapatos rojos" ("Red shoes") public art display. Based on a forensics and social assistance assessment, a workshop has been held on "the gender perspective in forensic work" in order to promote the considerate treatment of women victims.

19. In connection with the draft Act on the comprehensive protection for women against all forms of violence, the National Congress has launched the "Por Ellas" dissemination and awareness-raising campaign, a process of meetings, inter-agency workshops and social and departmental forums aimed at making up for delays, due to lack of sufficient civil-society participation, in the consideration of other similar draft legislation; and the "More women, better democracy" and "We are one half, we want parity" campaigns to raise women's participation in politics and decision-making.

20. In 2012, a training event on "gender-sensitive planning and budgeting in the institutions of administration of justice" was organized for participants from Paraguay, Honduras, Ecuador, El Salvador and Costa Rica. In 2014, the Judicial Secretariat for Gender Issues established the Technical Commission for Supporting Criminal Justice of the Supreme Court in replacement of the Technical Office for the Implementation of Criminal Reform. At the administrative level, the gender perspective and the Guaraní language have been introduced into the judiciary's staff selection and promotion process and into the handbook of responsibilities, while the rules for leaves, transfers and promotions have been readjusted.

21. Paraguay has presented reports on the application of the 12 critical areas of the Peking Platform for Action. The latest such report, submitted in May 2014, was an appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (held in 2000). Paraguay has actively participated in the Brasilia Consensus, the Montevideo Consensus, meetings of the presiding officers of sessions of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Meeting of Women Ministers and Senior Officials of MERCOSUR (RMAAM), meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (at the United Nations, New York), a forum on the "Convention of Belém do Pará and the prevention of violence against women", and the G77 + China international forum on "Women's proposals for a world order". In 2015, Paraguay participated in the consideration of its fourth periodic report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the World Economic Forum on Latin America, the

Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) and other regional and international events.

22. In 2000, together with 190 other countries, Paraguay, through the Millennium Declaration, committed itself to meeting the MDGs; and has submitted to the United Nations relevant periodic reports, including an overview of the status of women. At the United Nations summit held in New York in September 2015, the results achieved in certain areas, such as poverty reduction, enhanced basic education coverage and higher immunization rates, were presented, while new challenges were identified in other areas. Paraguay contributed actively to the definition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including objectives, goals, indicators and strategies for policies aimed at gender equality and the realization of women's and children's rights throughout the world.

23. In the framework of the third national plan to provide equal opportunities for men and women, 2008-2017 (PNIO), a series of national documents and plans adopting the gender approach have been drawn up and implemented. They include the National Education Plan (2024), the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan (2009-2013 and 2014-2018), the Strategic Agrarian Framework (2009-2018), the National Public Safety Plan (2013-2018), the Strategic Economic and Social Plan (2008-2013) and the National Plan of Action for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2030).

Appropriate affirmative action measures to modify socio-cultural patterns. Measures for the proper appreciation, in family education, of motherhood and shared responsibility in the upbringing and development of children

Articles 4 and 5

24. With regard to the recommendation of paragraph 17 to take further steps to expand the acceptance of temporary special measures and their application, and the Committee's General Recommendation No. 25/2004, it should be noted that the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SENADIS) implements the National Plan of Action, up to 2030, for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted and validated at the national level. That instrument provides for temporary measures to enhance actual equality for disabled women in the areas of education, health and employment in the face of persisting barriers; for the implementation of the decree regulating Act No. 4934/13 on accessibility of the physical environment for persons with disabilities (2015), in cooperation with the private sector, including through a plan to upgrade the transport system, inter alia by ensuring the accessibility of public transport facilities; and for the transcription of the said Act into Braille.

25. In response to the Committee's concern, expressed in paragraph 18, over the lack of regulation of the media, which allows stereotypical images of women to be reproduced, including in the educational system throughout the country, the Ministry for Women's Affaires convened the representatives of community radio stations to discuss the role played in social development by their media, as a community education resource. This happened in the framework of a national forum entitled "Ñe' easãi" ("Word"), where the situation of women, their rights and the legislation protecting them were analysed. In 2014, in order to stimulate collective consideration of communication issues, a forum was created for public sector communicators to share their experience in the design and implementation of

awareness-raising campaigns. They constructively reviewed the campaigns of public institutions, identifying the main obstacles and challenges encountered in promoting public communication respectful of human rights from a gender perspective. The role of enterprises in the promotion of a democratic culture and respect for human rights was discussed with entrepreneurs, members of the Centre for communication regulation, standards and research (CERNECO); and a basis was established for producing information that highlights the priorities, needs and perspectives of men and women.

26. Through the State Communicators' Team (ECOE), the Secretariat for Information and Communication (SICOM) carries out sensitization and awareness-raising campaigns concerning violence against women. All State media (the Paraguay TV HD channel, the national (AM/FM) radio, the Paraguay news agency, and the San Pedro and Pilar national radio stations) broadcast the campaigns undertaken by public or international organizations in the country. Thus, after appropriate training, the State media and ECOE are using gender-sensitive language and a non-sexist style. Training in, inter alia, human rights and the new policies on communication, is provided through the communication directorates of all State institutions.

27. In the framework of the national programme on communication and indigenous peoples, SICOM, the Language Policy Secretariat of the Office of the President and the Ministry for Women's Affaires jointly promote and mainstream the gender perspective through a "community information and communication technology (ICT) action plan with a gender approach", thereby furthering the communication policy for the indigenous peoples, upgrading their leadership and enhancing their active participation through training in communication tools.

28. As a strategy for attaining the target groups, the Ministry for Women's Affaires has formed partnerships with the national media, including the State channel (Paraguay Digital TV HD), which, free of charge, under specific agreements, have supported campaigns and various sensitization, awareness-raising and information advertisements in core, news, daily and special broadcasts.

29. An agreement concluded in 2010 between the Ministry for Women's Affaires and the Agricultural Credit Institute (Crédito Agrícola de Habilitación) for the introduction of innovative loan services designed for women led to the creation of two borrowing facilities, one for "women entrepreneurs", exclusively for women, and one for "young entrepreneurs", for women and men (on a parity basis); and to an inter-agency arrangement, involving six ministries and secretariats of the Office of the President, for using credit transfers from abroad as counterpart funds to secure financing. The initial borrowing facility amounted to Guarani 4 billion, added to a village bank borrowing facility, and 86 per cent of the beneficiaries were women. That arrangement resulted in 27,458 loans (to 21,062 women and 6,396 men) totalling Guarani 74,318,637,500 as of October 2015.

30. In Paraguay's formal education system, recovery and preservation of women's identity is viewed as a historical necessity. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education and Culture has mainstreamed gender equality into the education reform plan and the regulations of basic education (first through ninth degrees), highlighting the male and female identity and women's role in private and public life, culture and education in various historical periods and the present. Courses on "education and human rights" were organized for locally recruited teachers who received training in

"human rights and gender". Compensatory education and care services were promoted under a programme addressing "the process of ending up on the street, and the street environment". Indigenous education mechanisms support and organize forums and meetings for young indigenous persons in order to promote adolescent participation.

31. In order to promote a culture of gender equality and combine audiovisual tools with non-sexist education, training workshops were organized for teachers and students of 13 secondary schools on "Cinema and gender: use of the cinema in the classroom", with a view to stimulating school discussions on the illegitimacy of violence and discrimination and proposing alternative forms of behaviour and attitudes respectful of the human rights, equality and dignity of all.

32. As a way of visualizing and raising awareness of violence and discrimination against women, the fourth "Ta'anga Kyre'y" national short-film contest, dedicated to domestic violence and gender discrimination was held as part of the "Eighteenth International Festival of Film, Art and Culture" dedicated to "Women in the Cinema" (Spanish Cultural Centre — El Cabildo Cultural Centre).

Violence against women

33. With regard to violence against women, considering the Committee's General Recommendation No. 19 and in order to raise awareness of women's rights and reduce discrimination, communication campaigns such as those listed below were carried out in the period 2011-2015:

- "Combating sexual harassment in the civil service" (2011), including the following five handbooks, aimed at raising awareness of the civil servants' rights and obligations:
  1. Handling of sexual and workplace harassment cases;
  2. Equality and non-discrimination;
  3. Family co-responsibility;
  4. Collective agreements on working conditions;
  5. Social dialogue;
- "Let's live for a life without violence" (2011);
- "Zero abuse in Paraguay", with leading roles assigned to young persons resolved to combat violence so as to raise awareness of gender abuse, particularly among their peers at the regional level (2011);
- "Call 137, women's helpline", including a presentation of excuses that women usually find to justify violence and a description of the services provided by the Ministry for Women's Affaires (2011);
- "You have rights", aimed at raising awareness among the general public and ensuring the exercise of domestic workers' rights (2012);
- "False promises are a fact, human trafficking too", revealing the use of hiring advertisements as a human trafficking ploy with a view to the sexual exploitation of women (2012);

- "Closing the tap of violence against women", using water bills to inform women and men of the services provided through the "Call 137, women's helpline" (2012);
- "Ehechakuaáke" ("open your ears"), "Report violence against women"/ "Realize!", aimed at promoting among men a new attitude, consisting in rejecting and reporting violence against women (2012);
- "Ana" campaign, "Let's speak frankly about violence against adolescents and young persons" ("Ñañomgetàkena umimbae`vaieta ojejapova mitakuña'i ha mitäkuñarehe") (2011);*
- "Anita" campaign, aimed at addressing the issue of gender-based violence (2013);*
- "Teacher Ana's letters: Tell me your story and help me to change mine" ("Emombe' únachéve nerembihasakue ha chepytyvõtamoambue che rembihasa");*

* *These three campaigns targeted the education sector (initial, basic and secondary education and all categories of teachers);*

- "Neither to me, nor to you, nor to her" (2014);
- "Feasts without violence against women" (2014);
- "Harassment in the street is a form of violence against women" (2015);
- "Dating without violence", addressing young persons to promote healthy relations in couples and change patriarchal mentalities (2015).

With European Union support, a survey on gender-based domestic violence through November 2013 has been carried out in order to compile relevant information comparable to findings in other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The survey results were presented in 2014.

34. In 2015, the Ministry for Women's Affaires, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), launched the "Ciudad Mujer" ("City of Women") project to help to improve living conditions for women through essential services provided by "comprehensive care centres". The first "Ciudad Mujer" centre is being established in the city of Villa Elisa, Central Department, and is expected to open and begin to operate in 2017. The Ministries of Public Health and Social Welfare, Labour, Employment and Social Security, Finance, Education and Culture, Justice, and Internal Affairs shall participate. The national plan for the prevention of, care in relation to, protection from and prosecution of violence against women, 2015-2020, is being applied and strengthened through partnership agreements and contracts with various sectors to implement policies, plans and programmes for mainstreaming relevant measures into the activities of State and civil society bodies.

35. In the framework of the regional programme to combat violence against women in Latin America (ComVoMujer), the Ministry for Women's Affaires, with the help of the German organization for international cooperation (GIZ), implements a programme for conferring the "safe enterprise, free of violence and discrimination against women" label for efforts undertaken by enterprises to promote non-discrimination and non-violence against women, with visible results in the enterprise, in the local community or at the national or international levels. The

initiative was institutionalized through Resolution No. 241/15. A survey on the cost of gender violence to the country's enterprises has been carried out through a sample of 7,457 workers of 25 middle-sized and large industrial, manufacturing, commercial and service firms in four cities.

36. The Public Defender Service permanently participates in the inter-agency board on the prevention of, care in relation to, and protection from violence against women and on victim follow-up, in connection with the national plan on violence against women, 2015-2020. In the period 2011-2015, the Service organized seminars to promote the access of vulnerable persons to justice and to mainstream the gender perspective into the civil service as a whole. In 2013, Resolution No. 987/13 instructed public defenders to require the application of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules) Rules. In 2015, a seminar on the Bangkok Rules was organized to promote their use in the area of responsibility of the Service, which also participated in drafting a regional manual of good practices regarding women deprived of liberty.

37. In September 2014, the National Congress, through the Commission on Social Equity and Gender, organized an international seminar on new and old forms of violence against women in Paraguay. On that occasion, the "Por Ellas" campaign to promote the preparation of the Act on comprehensive protection for women was presented. The initiative, supported by the Ministry for Women's Affaires, UN-Women and the Coalition to End Violence against Women, includes more than 50 civil society organizations. The campaign was officially launched in October 2014. In Declaration No. 186 of 27 November 2014, the Chamber of Deputies characterized the campaign as being "of national interest" and urged the State bodies and media to disseminate it.

38. Sections that specifically receive complaints of violence against women, children and adolescents have been set up in 15 specialized police stations created in various departments of the country. Specialized care services for women experiencing violence operate in Asunción and four departments. In 2015, the Police promoted the Blue Heart Campaign of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with the slogan "Report trafficking. Don't become an accomplice".

39. The Attorney-General's Office issued General Instruction No. 9/2011 on "procedures for investigating into the offences of family violence and gender-based violence" for all of the country's prosecutors dealing with family and domestic violence cases, so as to ensure effective and efficient criminal inquiries by assistant prosecutors, deputy prosecutors, and directors, chiefs, coordinators and officials of judicial and administrative authorities. That instrument is binding. Instruction No. 9/2015 lays down procedures for requesting the Centre for Victims of the Attorney-General's Office to take action. That body provides assistance during criminal proceedings, including public hearings; and to this date has offered care to 796 persons affected by domestic violence. Forensic experts in the Public Prosecution Service carry out medical examinations necessary for the investigation.

40. Arrangements were made for the Complaints Bureau of the Public Prosecution Service to be present in the Medical Emergency Centre so that victims of sexual abuse, sexual coercion and domestic violence could undergo a medical examination and lodge a complaint in one and the same place.

41. The Supreme Court has ordered the opening of a 24-hour unit to receive complaints relating to domestic violence. Once entered into the system, the complaints are immediately communicated to a magistrate's court on duty according to a weekly shift system laid down by the Supreme Court.

42. In 2015, new facilities were set up in the Ministry for Women's Affaires for greater privacy, confidentiality and speed through combined services and efficiency in the areas of statistics, admission, psychological support and legal advice. The Women's Support Service (SEDAMUR) provides comprehensive care, information and counselling to women in situations of violence.

43. Two temporary shelters have been set up to provide protection and refuge to women victims of violence who live under extremely difficult conditions, and their children. Such persons receive free comprehensive care offered by a multidisciplinary team of social workers, psychologists and lawyers (in the period November 2010 - July 2015, 229 women and 334 children were thus assisted). In 2015, the Asunción municipal authorities launched the "First temporary shelter for women victims of domestic violence" having the capacity to assist 50 women and their children. Assistance includes personalized care by support, orientation, legal counselling and training professionals.

44. Between its inception in November 2011 and July 2015, "Call 137, women's helpline" received a total of 41,262 calls. It provides national coverage on a 24-hour basis, including holidays and weekends, offering clear and effective information to women facing domestic or intra-family violence.

45. In response to the concern expressed by the Committee in paragraph 20 over the need to train medical personnel further so that it may provide appropriate care for women facing violence and to create a coordinated system for collecting data on gender-based violence, the Ministry for Women's Affaires is in the process of organizing in-house technical capacity-building and trainers' training in gender and violence issues for professionals and students of the Andres Barbero Institute of the Asunción National University. The same process has been launched in the professional nursing course of the same faculty's facilities in the San Estanislao district, San Pedro department. The Psychological Assistance Service (SAP), a non-remunerated internship programme for psychology students of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Asunción National University, has been implemented in the framework of the "Call 137, women's helpline" initiative. The tools developed for comprehensive care and investigation include the "Regional Protocol of comprehensive care for victims of gender-based violence" and the "Institutional coordination mechanisms regarding gender-based violence". Since 2011, approximately 2,200 officials of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare have received training.

46. In view of the Committee's concern over the lack of a coordinated and coherent system for collecting data on gender-based violence, a "single registry of services provided to gender-based violence victims" (RUVIG) has been put into operation, and the Ministry for Women's Affaires implements the related programme "SI SEDAMUR" through the Directorate of Women's Support Services (SEDAMUR). The system serves to ensure exchange of information on services rendered between agencies and to validate the quality of institutional registries so as to supply appropriate data for indicators agreed upon with relevant national and international organizations and create new indicators for formulating prevention

policies and plans. Note should be made of the "Second survey on victims and public security from a gender perspective" and the national centre for monitoring security and citizen coexistence, an instrument of the technical sub-unit according to resolution No. 122 of 3 April 2013. The technical sub-unit of the "Regional System of Standardized Indicators in Peaceful Coexistence and Citizen Security", a cooperation project, functions within the Ministry for Women's Affaires, which collaborates with the Ministry of the Interior, in charge of the unit, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Works, the Technical Planning Secretariat, the Police, the Public Prosecution Service, the judiciary, the Ministry of Foreign Affaires, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents (SNNA), the National Antidrug Secretariat and the Ministry of Justice.

Measures to eliminate trafficking in women

Article 6

47. Taking into consideration the Committee's recommendations, Paraguay adopted, in 2012, Act No. 4788/12, which aims at preventing and punishing human trafficking in any of its manifestations, whether perpetrated in the national territory or abroad. A further aim is to protect and assist victims by strengthening government action against such criminal conduct. Under that Act, Decree No. 8309/2012 launched the National Policy for the Prevention and Prosecution of Trafficking in Persons in Paraguay, 2010-2019, and a national plan to prevent and combat human trafficking in the period 2014-2018 has been drawn up on a participatory basis in Asunción and the country's departments. These instruments and tools for the prevention and punishment of human trafficking include comprehensive care for the victims by all State bodies concerned. A proposal to create, pursuant to the above Act, the "National Investment Fund to Prevent and Care for Human Trafficking Victims" has been formulated and incorporated into the draft budget for 2016. The Fund is expected to finance activities against human trafficking and for comprehensive care, under the responsibility of the relevant inter-agency board.

48. In order to address the complexities of trafficking in women and children, the Ministry for Women's Affaires, as a member of the inter-agency board to prevent and combat human trafficking in Paraguay, focuses on a rehabilitation programme and, as a matter of priority, a shelter for women, children and adolescents by providing immediate support in terms of accommodation, food, health care, comprehensive assistance and access to available resources, with a view to facilitating the process of integration and social inclusion, under equal and discrimination-free conditions. Moreover, an interdisciplinary team (of, inter alia, psychologists, lawyers and social workers) in a referral centre enters into direct contact with victims to provide comprehensive support and develop, with them, a life plan.

49. Departmental and district inter-agency coordination boards operate in nine of the country's departments. The Public Prosecution Service has put in place "measures to protect witnesses, victims, participants and justice officials in criminal proceedings"; and is creating a directorate with three technical departments to provide comprehensive, interdisciplinary and victimological support for victims and facilitate investigations and inquiries with the victims by prosecutors and technical departments of the Specialized Unit to Combat Human Trafficking and the Sexual

Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. Moreover, procedures for investigations into cases of domestic or gender-based violence are being established.

50. In October 2015, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents (SNNA)inaugurated the "Rosa Virginia" shelter, specialized in children and adolescents victims of human trafficking or sexual exploitation. The Secretariat implements and finances the "Dignity for children and adolescents victims of human trafficking" project, aimed at facilitating the social and family reintegration of victims through efficient and safe shelter facilities for comprehensive support consisting in the victims' defence and emotional recovery and in the promotion of their rights in a respectful, effective and credible manner. An arrangement, supplementary to an agreement, was concluded with the Buen Pastor "Nuestra Señora de la Caridad" congregation to strengthen the national system for comprehensive protection and policies on children and adolescents and cooperate in the operation of the shelter so as to create appropriate conditions of sojourn for the children and adolescents concerned.

51. In raising the standing of the Ministry for Women's Affaires, the management of the ministerial programme to combat human trafficking became a General Directorate. It organized sensitization and awareness-raising days for the staff of prosecutorial, educational, police, tourism, INTERPOL, military and social-action authorities in Asunción and the country's interior, including the Chaco region. International seminars with representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Mexico and Guatemala have taken place. Partnerships have been formed with OAS, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), ILO, IADB, and the Andean Development Corporation (ADC) of IADB. The "False promises are a fact, human trafficking too" and "MERCOSUR free of trafficking in women" awareness-raising campaigns were launched and implemented and a documentary entitled "New Girls 24 Hours" was produced. The National Post Office Service issued stamps visually highlighting the scourge in question. A manual of care for human trafficking victims has been drawn up, offering improved models for the relevant activities. Studies are made on the basis of the information gathered by the monitoring centre of the Gender Unit operating in the Directorate-General for Statistics, Surveys and Censuses; and a regional diagnostic study on trafficking in women for sexual exploitation has been carried out.

52. In the boundary commissions coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affaires, gender committees have been set up and an appropriate approach to trafficking in women and girls has been introduced, particularly in order to strengthen migration control, identify victims and establish bilateral care and action arrangements with other countries.

Part II. Measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the country's political and public life

Article 7

53. In view of the observation of paragraph 24, where the Committee expresses concern over women's limited presence and participation in the political and public life of the country, the Ministry for Women's Affaires established an office responsible for "women's promotion and participation". The office aims to enhance women's political involvement in decision-making, including social and indigenous

women's participation. Currently, political dialogue and public campaigns are promoted in coordination with the Higher Electoral Tribunal and in cooperation with UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with a view to drawing up a programme of work to boost women's empowerment and participation in elected office duties. In collaboration with women's civil-society organizations, public discussions and consultations are organized concerning the draft Act on political parity, and the "We are one half, we want parity" and "More women, better democracy" campaigns are implemented in the context of the 2015 municipal elections and, in particular, the 2018 general elections. An agenda for women's political equality in the media was presented on 27 October 2015, while the presentation of the draft Act on parity to the National Congress has been planned for 8 March 2016.

54. In response to the above observation and the recommendation in paragraph 35 (a), under "Disadvantaged groups of women", to adopt temporary special measures to accelerate the realization of the rights of indigenous women, forums have been set up between indigenous women, the central Government, local government, civil society, indigenous organizations and volunteers in order to promote the political participation and empowerment in question, and thematic dialogue and exchange spaces have been organized in order to compile a list of proposals on which to work.

55. The resolution to declare the "More women, better democracy" and "We are one half, we want parity" campaigns to be of national and social interest is aimed at encouraging the participating organizations to disseminate and raise awareness of the importance of efforts to promote women's political participation. The campaign goal is to strengthen women's involvement in public life so that they may occupy half of the elected offices and government and decision-making positions.

56. Section (r) of the Electoral Code, adopted under Act No. 834/96, stipulates a minimum 20 per cent quota for women on national electoral lists, without imposing any order of precedence in the list. However, in the period under consideration, some political parties established a minimum higher than the above norm and, in certain cases, parity. Parity has been stipulated by the following parties: Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Éticos (UNACE), Revolucionario Febrerista (PRF), Movimiento al Socialismo (PMAS), Independiente en Acción (PIA), Frente Amplio (PFA) and Participación Ciudadana (PPC).

57. As a result of general elections for the period 2013-2018, women account for 15 and 20 per cent in, respectively, the Chamber of Deputies (with 12 deputies out of 80) and the Senate (with 9 senators out of 45), compared to, for both Chambers, 8, 10 and 13.6 per cent in, respectively, the periods 1993-1998, 1998-2003 and 2003-2008. Thus, the overall average rate of increase in women's participation in government bodies during the above period has been 4 per cent.

58. In the current administration (2013-2018), women are in charge of 3 out of 12 Ministries (those of Education and Culture, Justice, and Women's Affaires) and 5 out of the 19 Executive Secretariats of ministerial rank attached to the Office of the President of the Republic (the National Secretariats for Housing and Habitat, Culture, Language Policy, and Tourism and the Institute of Arts and Crafts). Of the nine Supreme Court members, three are women, a level never before attained, although still below parity.

59. In 2013, the Ministry for Women's Affaires, in cooperation with UN-Women, presented an assessment of the situation of the country's care policies and/or activities and the strategy for developing a single national policy in that area. As a result, the authorities committed themselves to pursuing a policy aimed at a national care system.

60. Despite a slight increase in women's presence in the National Congress, the percentage of women candidates in departmental plurinominal constituencies is declining. Of the 6,272 candidates vying for 228 departmental board seats for the period 2013-2018, 14 per cent were women. As regards the office of governor, to which a single individual is named, the smaller the constituency and the fewer the polling stations, the greater is women's exclusion, so that, in this case, of the 222 candidates vying for 17 posts, 6 per cent were women. At the municipal level, the percentage of women increased slightly with regard to the period 2010-2015: in 238 municipalities, 8 per cent of women candidates were elected to 18.3 per cent of the country's 2,529 municipal council seats. Lastly, 52 per cent of women vote. (See annex 2)

61. In relation to mayoral elections for the period 2015-2020, there are 80 women candidates for 250 municipalities and, given the current situation of women, the results are expected to be disappointing. In relation to municipal council members, 10,469 women were chosen to stand as candidates on 15 November 2015. There is therefore a need for an inter-agency process to increase the number of women in elected offices and decision-making positions

Equality in political and public life at the international level, and participation in international organizations

Article 8

62. In reference to the recommendation of paragraph 25 to increase women's representation in political and public life, including at the international level, it should be noted that, at the national level, women have, since the first class of "female officers" of the Mariscal Francisco Solano López military academy (2006), gradually penetrated the military, although their presence continues to be mainly visible in the health, administrative and services sectors. Police personnel includes 3,567 women engaged in conflict prevention, management and resolution, and in decision-making as heads of departments, offices, divisions, sections, and police stations and sub-stations.

63. At the international level, 92 women recruited by the Army and having taken "military observer" and "team training" courses are part of the Joint Peacekeeping Training Centre (CECOPAZ). A total of 22 women officers and non-commissioned officers have been deployed in mission areas. In the period 2011-2015, 26 women of the Paraguayan engineers' multipurpose contingent participated in peace-keeping operations of the United Nations, namely the Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and the Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (Argentine Task Force (FTA)-UNFICYP). As part of the fifth engineers' contingent, they are currently deployed in Haiti and Cyprus. Women's participation in such activities is increasing and is continuously encouraged by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) of the United Nations. The Police includes no female personnel in connection with peace-keeping

operations, humanitarian assistance or the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security of the.

64. The Ministry for Women's Affaires participates in an inter-agency board whose other members are six ministries, two State secretariats, military and Police staff and training institutions, civil society organizations and international cooperation bodies. The board's activities consist in assessments and training in respect of the relevant provisions in force, preparation of a related national plan of action, and implementation of the above Security Council resolution. Currently, the board coordinates and advises on activities organized by bodies having signed an inter-agency agreement for specific cooperation in implementing the said resolution. The material related to the national plan of action is reproduced with the assistance of UN-Women.

Part III. Equality in education

Article 10

65. In relation to the concerns expressed by the Committee in paragraph 26 and to paragraphs (a) and (b) of article 10 of the Convention, free compulsory initial, basic and secondary education is guaranteed by the 1992 Constitution and by Act No. 4088/11. Accordingly, the implementation of the National Education Plan 2024, through a strategic institutional agenda, aims at quality education in order to improve conditions for the population as a whole. To that end, resources have been transferred to the educational institutions concerned and their operation has been supported. The provision of sets of scholastic material to public sector institutions and the promulgation of Act No. 5210/14 on school feeding and health control help to universalize education. The "Ñamyendy Tata" gender-sensitive public policy for young persons and adults, 2011-2024, seeks to ensure access, acceptance, cultural suitability, efficiency and fairness of education for young persons and adults, particularly the historically disadvantaged groups, as a public good and a human right. The Ministry for Women's Affaires has prepared and distributed to the National Occupational Promotion Service (SNPP) and the Basic and Further Occupational Training System (SINAFOCAL), for nation-wide dissemination, manuals with a gender perspective on empowerment and business planning for vulnerable women.

66. The Ministry for Women's Affaires has cooperated with the Higher Teacher Training Institute (ISE) on the review and analysis of training programmes from a gender perspective in the official basic, graduate and postgraduate teacher training syllabus and on the organization of thematic workshops for training and supporting college trainers implementing the syllabus as adapted.

67. Under a plan for equality in higher education (IGES) developed in cooperation with the Directorate for Postgraduate Studies of the Asunción National University, 39 civil servants deployed in State institutions have received certificates in specialized management of public policies on gender issues.

68. As regards paragraphs (c) and (e) of article 10, public, private and subsidized private educational institutions practice coeducation for children over 10. The curricula, study programmes and training modules of basic and secondary education for young persons and adults have been revised from a gender perspective. In that

framework, proposals have been implemented as regards the completion of basic education of vulnerable women, such as literacy programmes for young persons and adults designed for women employed as domestic help and for sex workers. Training in formal and informal literacy or basic-education completion programmes has been provided to reference or relay persons and facilitators.

69. The main goal of a programme entitled "Strengthening action for equality and against gender violence in education, 2011-2012" consists in capacity-building at all management and operational levels of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the promotion of gender equality with a human rights approach in public policy management.

70. With respect paragraph (d) of article 10, of the 5,518 secondary education and 4,128 higher education scholarships granted for 2015 by the National Scholarships Board, 52 and 69.88 per cent, respectively, went to, respectively, girls and women and were distributed among the administrative departments according to the geographic priority index (GPI). Of the 90 applicants admitted through the first of two competitions held by National Post-graduate (master's and doctoral degree) Scholarships Board under the "Don Carlos Antonio Lopez" Paraguay 2030 initiative for research, innovation and education abroad, 47 are women.

71. As regards paragraph (f) of the same article on female student drop-out rates, the general average rate shows parity in gross school enrolment. In 2013, as many girls as boys participated in primary and secondary education. Despite overall gender parity, challenges persist, especially in secondary education in the rural areas, given that 20 per cent of the country's pregnancies occur at age 10-19 and increased by 4 per cent in the period 2009-2013. As an effective violence- and pregnancy-prevention, sensitization and information tool underscoring children's and adolescents' rights, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare has distributed audiovisual educational material on "adolescent Pregnancies in Paraguay" (annex 3).

72. The National Secretariat for Childhood and Adolescence (SNNA) has broadened the coverage of the "Abrazo" ("Hug") programme and provides care to 3,217 heads of household (2,961 or 92 per cent of whom are women), children and adolescents, including 1,283 girls aged 14-17 and 4,247 younger girls. SNNA focuses on girls because of their greater vulnerability to abuse. Under the Community Development Plan, SNNA provides care to 109 girls and 16 female adolescents of indigenous groups.

73. In the area of formal education, the basic secondary curriculum includes sexual and reproductive health, addressed through the disciplines of, inter alia, health, personal and social development and the natural sciences, in connection with the right to responsible sexuality, which is discussed in relevant school subjects. In secondary education, the "Jaikuaa" ("Pay attention") project, coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Peace and Justice Service (SERAJ) since 2012 in departments targeted on the basis of an assessment of young persons' perceptions, provides information through inter-generational networks consisting of teachers, parents and pupils or students.

74. As regards paragraph (g) of the same article on offering women the same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education, there has been gradual progress, although women's adequate participation in individual and

collective sports, an area traditionally considered as masculine, has not yet been achieved. According to the National Secretariat for Sport, teams representing Paraguay at the domestic and international level included 16 women in 2011, 52 in 2012, 47 in 2013, 48 in 2014 and 24 in 2015.

Articles 11 and 13

75. In accordance with the Committee's recommendation, in paragraph 29, to take all necessary steps to ensure the implementation of labour legislation, address pay gaps, encourage women to take up employment in non-traditional fields and amend the legislation in order to improve the conditions of work for domestic workers, Act No. 5115/13 creating the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security" has been adopted in order to monitor compliance with the workers' rights in the areas in question. The main provisions on gender equality are contained in article 4(14) of the Act, which refers to the promotion of equal opportunities and treatment for men and women, access to employment and protection of motherhood. The Act established the General Directorate for Women Workers' Development. The gender perspective has been mainstreamed into the instruments for compiling, in State bodies and organizations, personnel management indicators that serve to draw up remuneration, qualification and competition schemes (for fair and non-discriminatory entry and promotion in public sector bodies).

76. Act No. 5407/15 on domestic work calls for working conditions comparable to those of workers in general, namely an eight-hour day, access to health care and retirement benefits, and 18 years as minimum age of employment. A key demand, namely raising the domestic workers' minimum wage from 40 to 60 per cent of the general minimum wage, is still pending (article 11, paragraphs (d), (b) and (a)). (See annex 4)

77. In addition to the above increase in the minimum age of employment regarding unpaid domestic child labour (criadazgo), the National Commission for the Elimination of Child Labour and the Protection of Working Adolescents has taken action in places where minors work outside the provisions of the said Act, such as brick factories and limekilns. The creation, in the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, of a care centre for paid female domestic workers which assists both the workers and the employers has been a key advance (paragraph (c) of the recommendation).

78. Pursuant to the Committee's recommendations, information and training are provided to encourage registration with the labour inspectorate. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security has launched a relevant information campaign addressing all enterprises employing more than 50 workers. Moreover, the Ministries for Women's Affaires and of Health, Education and Culture and Labour, Employment and Social Security have formed a working group to formulate a new regulatory provision for nurseries or day-care centres for 2-year olds.

79. Under Act No. 4819/2012, ratifying the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), various seminars on and training in entrepreneurial culture have been developed, and the vocational training curriculum for domestic workers has been revised to meet the current needs of the sector concerned.

80. Through the Microsol Foundation and the Health for All Mutual Aid Centre (CAMSAT), the Ministry for Women's Affaires has established significant public-

private linkages for the promotion of loans to poor women excluded from the financial system. Through the National Commission of Financial Inclusion and the Inter-agency Board for Vulnerable Population Groups, the Ministry seeks to mainstream the gender perspective into public policies so that women in extreme poverty may be viewed as a group in need of specific support. The promotion of decentralized public policies focused on access to economic resources, employment and education under conditions of equal opportunities as a priority for the implementation of the institutional strategic plan and the third national equal-opportunities plan.

81. With regard to loans, an institutional policy for gender-sensitive financial inclusion has been developed in cooperation with Agricultural Empowerment Credit (CAH). The policy enhances the rural women's access to credit, offering financial products adapted to the local needs. Such products include "Women entrepreneurs", "Young entrepreneurs" and the village bank borrowing facility.

82. Women's significant participation in micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises has led to adoption of Act No. 4457/12, which calls for the creation of the Office of the Deputy Minister for such enterprises within the Ministry of Industry and Trade and for affirmative measures to extend loans to single mothers and women heads of household.

83. The adoption of Act No. 5508 on the promotion and protection of motherhood and support for breastfeeding has been crucial. In addition to increasing maternal leave from 12 to 18 weeks in the public and private sectors, it provides for a two-week paternal leave, promotes responsible paternity, prohibits dismissing a worker known to be pregnant, characterizes any such notice and dismissal as null and void, and stipulates time off for breastfeeding. Under the Act, maternity leave shall be extended to cover 24 weeks if the child is born prematurely or weighs less than 1 kg; and, in the event of multiple gestation, shall increase by one month for each child, beginning with the second infant.

Equal access to health care for women

Article 12

84. In reference to the recommendation of paragraph 31(c) to strengthen health-care capacity and the implementation of programmes and policies aimed at providing effective access for women to health care information and services, Paraguayan legislation, policies and programmes guarantee the right to health information and to access to contraceptive services and methods. In that framework, viewing family planning as a means of reducing maternal and neonatal mortality and encouraging the population to make use of health services, Presidential Decree No. 773/13, on the initiative of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, declared 29 November "national family-planning day", with the slogan "Plan your life, plan your family". Resolution No. 1173/13 implementing Act No. 3803/09 provides for paid leave granted to workers for the purpose of a Pap smear and mammography.

85. In the period 2012-2014, significant progress was made under inter-agency cooperation agreements between the Ministry for Women's Affaires and the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare for the promotion and protection of women's health-related rights and a life without violence. Through joint efforts,

gender perspective mainstreaming processes were developed, a gender and health mechanism was created, an inter-agency gender and health technical board was established for relevant programme and project design, formulation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, gender indicators were built into Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare budgetary procedures, and the strategic thrusts of national health policy were reviewed and validated in the framework of the National Health System.

86. The following initiatives are aimed at gender perspective mainstreaming: "Plan to reduce maternal mortality"; "National mobilization for the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality" campaign; "National gender and health strategy, 2011-2013" under the "Comprehensive health for women and men" programme; "Sexual and Reproductive Health" programme of the Social Security Institute; "Sexual and reproductive health plan, 2013" with a gender, human-rights and intercultural-relations approach; and "First national strategic plan to combat HIV/STIs, 2014-2018", which covers the main relevant lines of action for the period 2013-2017.

87. The "standards of post-abortion care with a human face" were introduced in 2012 through Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare Resolution No. 146, which calls for access to quality health services and care without any discrimination, under full confidentiality and medical secrecy, for women after an abortion, with the involvement of health workers bound by the confidentiality obligation.

88. The "National sexual and reproductive health plan, 2014-2018" provides for equitable and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care, based on a gender, human-rights and intercultural-relations approach, meeting the population's basic needs and, especially, respectful of sexual and reproductive rights. The plan addresses seven strategic high-priority areas under the current health policy for more accessible, fair and effective care, including family planning. The aim is to ensure that all persons of reproductive age may exercise their right to voluntary family planning through timely access to full and accurate information, quality services, and free and effective contraceptives, on the basis of a multicultural approach, freedom of choice and differentiated strategies for specific groups, such as adolescents, indigenous peoples, disabled persons, persons living with HIV, and socially and economically disadvantaged persons. Sexual and reproductive health inputs, including medicines for safe pregnancy and neonatal health, contraceptives, equipment, instruments and other essential supplies, are to be made available thanks to, inter alia, the budgets of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare and the Social Security Institute, and by the police and military health services.

89. Paragraph 31(a) of the concluding observations calls for action without delay and effective measures to deal with the high maternal mortality rate. The Secretariat for Social Action (SAS) implements the Tekoporã conditional allowances programme, aimed at improving the quality of life of poor families, promoting the protection of pregnant women through the "Kunu' (tenderness) project, and reducing maternal and neonatal mortality under the "Zero deaths, they are avoidable" national campaign led by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare with the support of UNICEF. In order to strengthen the childhood components of the above programme, pregnant participants in receive kits for the infants to be born.

90. The Ombudsman's Office, through the Women's Rights Department, has launched health establishment inspections to identify obstacles to proper functioning of gynaecology and obstetrics services.

91. The national strategic plan against HIV/STIs, drawn up under the National Programme to Control HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (PRONASIDA), includes, for the period 2013-2017, lines of action concerning prevention, promotion, education and communication. The programme for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) has been successfully implemented.

Equality for rural women

Article 14

92. An advance may be reported in relation to the Committee's concern, expressed in paragraph 32, over the disadvantaged position of rural women, who are most affected by poverty, challenges in access to health and social services and a lack of access to land. The advance consists in the adoption of Act No. 5446/15 on public policies for rural women, whose goal is to promote and safeguard rural women's economic, social, political and cultural rights, crucial to their empowerment and development. Seeking to promote further activities aimed at enhancing institutional services to rural woman, the Ministry for Women's Affaires redesigned its strategy for action through departmental and local government authorities so as to provide gender-related technical assistance, sensitization and training and introduce the gender approach into the State budget. The gender perspective has been mainstreamed into the said authorities through the creation of women's bureaus in the country's 17 departmental governor's offices and in 93 of the country's 247 municipalities.

93. Resolution No. 749/15, a result of considerable inter-agency efforts by the Ministry for Women's Affaires, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), approved the use of educational material for mainstreaming the gender perspective into the plans, programmes, projects and departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and of the autonomous and self-sufficient bodies concerned (through a basic conceptual framework and methodological strategies for gender mainstreaming into public policies, and through a gender-sensitive methodological approach to public policies on rural youth).

94. Further efforts are undertaken in the form of comprehensive enterprise-development programmes, practical training and microfinancing as poverty reduction tools, such as agricultural and technical education projects, school enhancement initiatives and the development of food production in family farming (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock). The beneficiaries of such activities are rural and indigenous family farmers in urban, periurban and rural areas. They are supported in using organic agents and effective production methods.

95. The "Jaku'eke" comprehensive action programme for women's social and economic empowerment is coordinated by the Ministry for Women's Affaires. It aims to establish management mechanisms so that specific inter-agency activities and coordinated public arrangements may serve as a model for field action in urban and periurban settlements where SAS implements the Tekoha programme. The

following activities and results should be mentioned: Comprehensive training procedures for beneficiary families who attend empowerment courses in the form of gender-related workshops based on personal experience; promotion of self-esteem, appropriate gender roles and empowerment; family farming; reforestation; soil management, organic pesticide preparation and recycling (for Asunción National University seniors in agrarian sciences, environmental engineering and agricultural management); caranday crafts promotion (Institute of Arts and Crafts); food preparation, handling and marketing (SAS and Faculty of Agrarian Sciences); enterprise creation, basic economics and business plan (for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises); and training in masonry (National Career Development Service). Active citizenship has been promoted among women through initial vocational training, skills upgrading, encouragement of entrepreneurial activities and community participation, in the framework of synergies among State bodies at the central and local levels. (See annex 5)

96. The project to encourage women's participation in the labour market (ALA), carried out in cooperation with the European Union, includes support for women entrepreneurs on family farms in the form of resources granted to rural women so that they may secure or increase their incomes, contribute to food security and attain managerial autonomy. The project is implemented in seven departments (San Pedro, Caazapá, Canindeyú, Missiones, Paraguarí, Alto Paraguay and Ñeembucú). The relevant activities and results consist in advising and supporting women producers' committees and following up their activities, selecting committees to receive working capital for project development, supporting the establishment of micro-enterprises (for poultry and cattle raising and related production, bakery, confectionery, agricultural production, food fairs, production and marketing of cleaning items, apparel marketing, improvement of dairy farms, consumer goods stores, goat milk production, cattle product processing, balanced animal food production, dressmaking workshops, production of biodegradable items, chipa production, sausage making, arts and crafts, and sale of giblets). (Annex 5)

97. The Tekoporá conditional allowances programme (SAS) promotes children's basic rights through nutrition, health care and education, and the realization of the rights of women, including indigenous women (76 per cent of those entitled). It also promotes women's participation and empowerment through the organization of women producers' committees and the "women leaders" project in support of the other families participating in the programme. Of the 111,896 families currently assisted by the programme in 168 districts in 17 departments, 75 per cent are headed by women. Pursuant to the "Indigenous communities assistance protocol" (SAS Resolution No. 046/15) and to the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), 7,760 indigenous families have joined the programme. They are located in 264 communities (or 27 per cent of the country's indigenous communities); and 52 per cent of the total number of persons concerned are indigenous women.

98. The Tekoha programme (SAS) aims to provide housing solutions to poor and extremely poor urban and suburban families throughout the country. It provides for land ownership and regularization of buildings with a view to better access to basic services (water and power supply, housing, education and health care) and for improvement of the standard of living of the population concerned in the medium and long term. Currently, the programme assists 19,078 families located in 55 districts in 13 departments.

99. The FONAVIS programme (SENAVITAT) promotes social housing construction projects for poor and extremely poor groups, giving priority to single mothers and women heads of household.

100. The Ministry for Women's Affaires, with the support of FAO, implements a project for the period 2014-2017 to promote the empowerment of the country's rural women so as to ensure food security. The goal is to assist rural women's organizations and help with the establishment, operation, coordination and training of new ones in accessing the institutional system, so as to improve and coordinate their communication at the central, regional and local levels and ensure that they keep receiving up to date information conducive to their development and empowerment.

101. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, with the support of Plan Paraguay, implements a project aimed at education and decent work for rural adolescents and young persons, training in community leadership, technical training for at least 60 per cent of women heads of household, life and leadership skills development, and preparation for team work in view of a first job (in mechanized farming, horticultural and agricultural product processing and marketing, cattle, pig and poultry raising, bee-keeping, artificial insemination, animal health, and vehicle, motorcycle or other mechanics).

102. In relation to the Committee's deep concern, expressed in paragraph 34 under the heading of "Disadvantaged groups of women", over the high levels of vulnerability in relation to the right to adequate food and to safe drinking water, especially in the Chaco region, and the recommendations contained in paragraph 35, the National Environmental Sanitation Service (SENASA), with the support of IADB and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), within the framework of the National Programme for the Reduction of Extreme Poverty, has implemented the "Water and Sanitation Programme for Rural and Indigenous Communities" (PAySRI), whose objective is to improve access to drinking water and sanitation in the country's rural and indigenous communities with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, which will benefit approximately 315,450 persons. The Ministry for Women's Affaires and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, through the National Agricultural Technology institute and with FAO support, implemented in 2014 a project for raising goats and marketing the related products, which benefitted women from the Ayoreo Totobiegosode indigenous community, Alto Paraguay, through training in food security management. The trainees received goats, carried out the project and replicated the exercise in their communities,. An indigenous plan for food security is under preparation with the participation of all State bodies dealing with indigenous affaires.

103. Paragraph (a) of the same recommendation calls for temporary special measures to accelerate the realization of the rights of indigenous women. In that connection, work has been done in mainstreaming the gender perspective with an intercultural and human rights approach into the skills development programmes of the National Training and Work Skills Development System (SINAFOCAL) of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, establishing an inter-agency board for skills development programmes for indigenous groups.

Part IV Recognition of the equality of men and women rights between before the law

Article 15 and 16

104. The concern expressed by the Committee in paragraph 36 over the minimum legal age of marriage has been met in part with the promulgation of Act No. 5419/15 amending articles 17 and 20 of Act No. 1/92 and partially reforming the Civil Code to raise the age of consent to marriage to 18 years, although minors may marry from the age of 16 with the consent of their parents, their guardians or a judge. In reference to rights and responsibilities related to marriage and divorce, Act No. 5422/15 has amended articles 4, 5, 6, 7 and 13 of Act No. 45/91 on divorce, eliminating the three-year period required before a couple may apply for legal separation.